

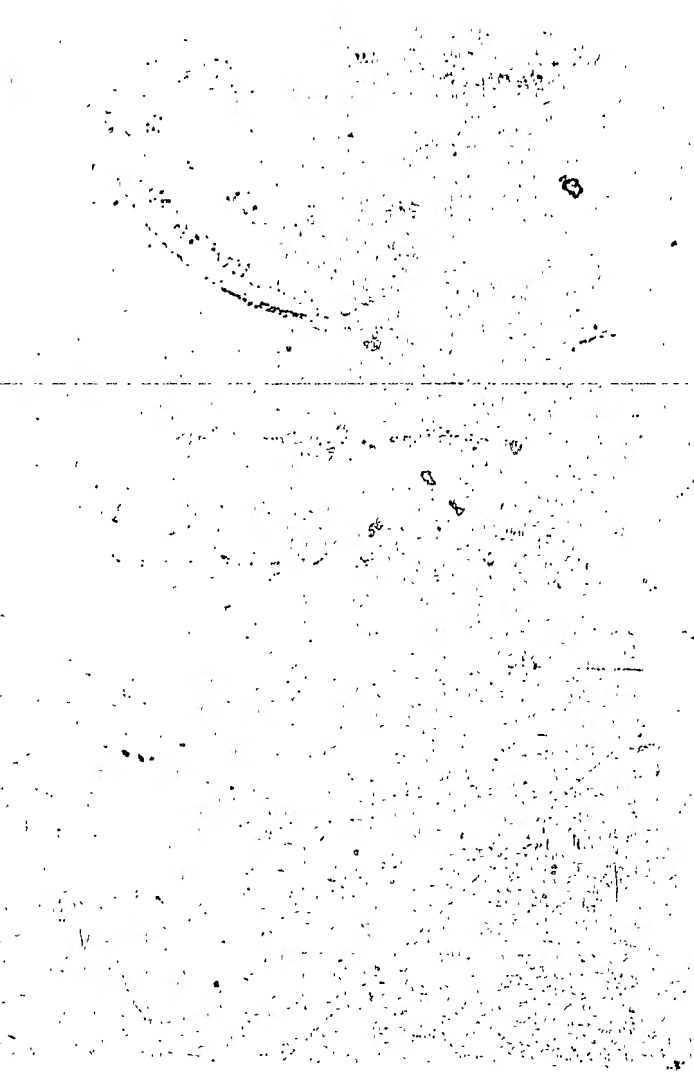
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The

U. F. W. A.

THE
ORGANIZATION
FOR
ALBERTA FARM
WOMEN



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THE U.F.A.

RETROSPECT

The United Farm Women of Alberta may now look back over many years of active service to their beginning as a Provincial Association in January, 1915—years filled with thoughtful study and achievement along lines of Social betterment. Before this organization, when women were still striving to obtain the franchise, the U.F.A., long an advocate of Equal Suffrage, admitted farm women to their Association on a basis of equality with the men and many able women availed themselves of this opportunity to take a part in public affairs and in solving the economic problems confronting the farmer; problems which affected the wife and family no less than the husband and father. As the organization grew, the women found that there was specialized work for them to do—in the field of community betterment work, social service and the like. This led to the organization of the separate organization, at first called the Women's Auxiliary to the U.F.A.

This little body of women before their second Convention, had plunged into Belgian Relief work, were working for Dominion wide equal suffrage, had taken up the matter of travelling libraries with the Extension Department of the University of Alberta and had organized forty women's locals; representatives from these, braving 55° below zero weather to attend the 1916 Convention.

Since that time, while the membership and the number of locals have fluctuated periodically with the prosperity or depression of the country at large, there has never been a slackening of that dominant spirit of progress and ser-

vice, which has guided the organization from its beginning. It proved the means of awakening a great dormant force into life and activity.

Farm Women for centuries had remained out of public life and suddenly they found themselves possessed of all citizenship rights and responsibilities. Here was something big that had to be met. How were women to be educated to meet these responsibilities intelligently? Only by participation in public life and the forming of groups to discuss and consider matters of vital importance to them. They were anxious to meet apart from the men, so that their first, stumbling efforts could be carried on free of embarrassment. Here was a great Provincial training school for citizenship, where women stood on their feet and expressed opinions; haltingly at first, perhaps, but as time went on they became convinced that these opinions counted, for one by one they saw them incorporated into laws, laws that would endure and be an aid to the women of future generations.

Out of these women's meetings grew a constantly widening influence for better community life—better schools, for municipal hospitals, Public Health Nurses, travelling dentists, rest rooms and community halls—all this springing up out of the efforts of these little groups of women studying conditions about them with a view to development and improvement. They were not only becoming better citizens, in the full sense of the word, but they were for the first time realizing their true responsibilities as good mothers and good home makers. They began to see that everything outside the home influenced the home; that if conditions were not desirable outside the home, the reflection of this would surely invade their domains. The result was a general housecleaning wherever their influence reached. These women were mobilized to war on defects in the social system, and their initial efforts, while broadening out only a little way from the home, more than justified their endeavors.

Gradually, as the educational process went on, from the community field, they progressed to the Provincial field and even to the Federal field, until today these women

stand on the same ground as do the men, from both a political and social aspect—though community development still holds and will always hold the particular attention of women.

One of the major achievements of the U.F.W.A. was the fostering of a Junior Branch of the U.F.A., which youthful organization affords an excellent training in U.F.A. work for farm boys and girls—giving them a broad view of what their rural problems as men and women will be, creates a desire to remain on the land, as well as a definite sense of pride in their work.

Out of the Junior Branch has grown "University Week for Farm Young People." This week of study and play is provided for the boys and girls of the Province each June in Edmonton, under the supervision of the Extension Department of the University of Alberta. A fitting course of practical studies is offered, designed to assist the young people in improving farm life economically and socially.

Rural school conditions have been greatly improved through the W.A. by means of School Fairs and Field Days, School Gardens, Hot Lunches, etc. The U.F.W.A. has secured Obstetrical Nurses to supplement the efforts of the medical profession in outlying districts and has heartily endorsed the Public Health Nurse, the Municipal Doctor and Municipal Hospital.

One cannot over estimate the value of the U.F.W.A. to the women themselves. The stimulating social intercourse which has helped to establish a more friendly and neighborly feeling in the various communities, relieving farm life of much of its isolation and monotony. The organization thus makes possible the enjoyment of the simplicity and wholesomeness of the life lived in the country, at the same time providing participation in social movements for the betterment of community and national life. Women coming to this western country a few years ago, from the East or the Old Country or the States, were inclined to spend most of their time wishing they had remained away from this lonely and sparsely populated

land. Today these same women wouldn't leave Alberta to go back to their former homes for any amount; they are busy building up a strong, healthy, new country through the U.F.W.A. and are delighting in their co-operative efforts with other women.

It is not possible to speak of the U.F.A. or the U.F.W.A. without touching on the democratic system of government that has grown out of the organization. The women play just as active a part in this great movement as the men, working just as assiduously in its development. Each local, according to membership, elects representatives to the Provincial Constituency Convention; these conventions in turn select a member to be voted on for the Provincial House. In the same way the Federal Constituency Conventions nominate members for the Federal House. Here is a system whereby the representative is responsible directly to the electorate rather than to the time-honored political boss. Woman has made her presence and strength felt here, too; she has proven that she is as emphatic in her demand for clean government as for a clean home.

BUILT FROM THE GROUND UP

The means used by the U.F.W.A. to bring the thought of its individual members to the attention of the total membership is an illustration of the democratic method of procedure which characterizes the whole farmers' movement. It is the custom in many organizations for matters of policy to be dictated from the top down, but in the case of the farm women's organization of this province, the policy of the association is not only decided by but originates with the locals themselves. Each group of women, discussing in their local clubs the questions which affect the welfare of farm women formulate their ideas in resolutions which are sent to the central office of the association to be circulated to all locals in the province in sufficient time before the annual convention to permit of discussion in each local. Representatives to the Annual Convention are sent in the proportion of one delegate for every twenty members or major portion of twenty. Each

delegate knows the decision of her club with regard to the resolutions to be brought before the convention and is therefore in a position to express that decision by her vote. In this way the final action taken is a true expression of the will of a majority of the total membership of the organization.

The executive body also holds office wholly through the choice of the membership at large and the election takes place at the Annual Convention. These executive officers consist of a President and two Vice-Presidents, one of the latter being chosen from the Northern part of the province, and the other from the Southern part of the province.

Organization work is carried on under the direction of directors, each director's territory covering one Federal Constituency. At the Annual Convention delegates from each constituency meet for a time in separate session and the director for the constituency is elected at this time.

Although the directors are themselves busy women, the organization work that is accomplished through their direction is remarkable, and the fact that they are in daily touch with exactly the same sort of problems that confront the farm women they are endeavoring to bring into the organization gives them a sympathetic understanding that cannot fail to make its appeal.

The United Farm Women of Alberta is closely allied with its sister organizations, the United Farm Women of Manitoba, United Farm Women of Ontario, and the Women's Section of the Saskatchewan Grain Growers. These three western farm women's organizations are linked up through the Women's Section of the Canadian Council of Agriculture, which is composed of one representative from each of the organizations mentioned above and one representative from the Grain Growers' Guide.

Thus the foundation of the organization has its logical place at the bottom of the structure. The generating power is located at the base, and all effort originates with the person most concerned, the farm woman herself.

INDIVIDUAL BENEFIT OF ORGANIZATION

To one in a position to scan the organization of farm women as a whole, as it extends throughout the Dominion, the vision of the vastness of co-operative effort often shuts out the individual benefit which comes to each little community and each member of a local. Without her organization, the farm woman drifts along day by day with nothing to call her attention to the problems which she is now given the responsibility of helping to solve; but let her come in contact with her neighbors at the regular meetings of her local; let her be drawn into the discussion of questions of public interest and her outlook will be broadened a hundred fold.

The broadening of the social and intellectual life of farm women is one of the most convincing arguments in favor of their organization. Its truth is borne out by the testimony of women who have attained positions of leadership in the farmers' movement.

The old saying, "The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world" is true only when the hand is guided by an intelligence that takes into account the world's activities. The sphere of woman's influence reaches far outside the home, however, and its next range is the community. Locals of the U.F.W.A. have accomplished wonderful improvements in community life. Upon the formation of a new local the most obvious field of improvement is the school, particularly the rural school. A band of women working earnestly in each rural community to make their own school the best possible can do much to raise the standard of rural education.

Many U.F.W.A. locals have been especially successful in instituting the school fair. In most cases these are carried on in co-operation with the schools of agriculture. The prize list includes all branches of school work, sewing, live stock, and gardening. Other accomplishments have included improved playground facilities, medical inspection of pupils, school field days, a neat and attractive school and grounds, first aid cabinets for the school room, hot

noon lunches, etc. Probably the best result of the interest the local takes in its rural school is the fine spirit of co-operation and good fellowship between the teacher and the parents, which is, after all, the secret of a successful school.

After the question of the welfare of the young people is considered, the next improvement naturally includes the grown-ups. Various means have been employed to meet the needs of a community center, such as rest rooms and community halls. These are used to house the travelling or permanent library which the local has secured, to exhibit the pathoscope films or magic lantern slides obtained from the Department of Extension, to accommodate meetings, home talent entertainments, community song fests, etc. Here again the attainment of purely material things is not the thing of paramount importance, but rather the spirit of unity which goes with joint effort for the common good.

It is not always easy for us to learn to live together. Nations have not learned it, and until they do there will be wars and more wars. It is the great problem of the age. All honor to the community which endeavors to realize the ideal of co-operation in its daily life. From the standpoint of individual benefit and community work alone, the value of the local is easily evident. It brings together neighbors who were before unknown to each other, and they become not only acquaintances but friends, thus it widens sympathies, establishes a feeling of comradeship, overcomes the loneliness that is sometimes experienced in rural communities, and impresses upon us the fact that, to live rightly we cannot live to ourselves alone, that "All are needed by each one."

A FEW ACHIEVEMENTS

But aside from innumerable community efforts, the value of which cannot be overestimated, the U.F.W.A. has taken an active interest in questions affecting the province and the nation as a whole. And this is a sequence that invariably occurs. When a group of women organize to

benefit their community life, they soon find that no community can "live unto itself." The result is a gradually awakened interest in broad public questions. Following are a few practical achievements of the U.F.W.A. in the solution of provincial problems:

1. Secured Obstetrical Nurses' to supplement the efforts of the medical profession in outlying districts.
2. Responsible for securing legislation instituting Municipal Hospitals.
3. Increased the interest and support given to Public Health Nurses.
4. Instrumental in securing present reforms of the Dower, Mothers' Allowance and other Acts of special benefit to women and children.
5. Organized Junior Branches for the purpose of training farm boys and girls in citizenship; interesting them in the improvement of rural conditions.
6. Helped institute Travelling Libraries.
7. Recommended changes in content of Public and High School courses and where these were redrafted were given representation on the revision committee.
8. Gave material aid to sufferers in drought areas.
9. In co-operation with Extension Department of the University of Alberta, obtained "University Week for Farm Young People," a conference held each June devoted to short educational courses and supervised social activities for boys and girls from Alberta farms.
10. Sponsored idea, and urged Health Department to send out travelling dentists.
11. Instrumental in securing passage of Federal law equalizing grounds for divorce as between men and women.
12. Drafted first Community of Property Bill for presentation to the Alberta Legislature, providing for joint ownership by husband and wife, of property acquired after marriage.

13. U.F.W.A. representatives have served on the following committees appointed by various departments of the Provincial Government:

- (a) Visiting Committee;
- (b) Advisory Committee
Property Rights of Married Women;
- (c) Women's Advisory Committee on Immigration.

14. Established the "Egg and Poultry Pool"; providing a means of marketing Alberta eggs and poultry to the best interests of the farm women.

The U.F.W.A. has provided an organization in which farm women can train themselves to take their proper place in the conduct of their country's affairs. This is evidenced more plainly at each succeeding Convention—it has given training in methods of conducting business; knowledge of our public institutions and of government; and has developed confidence and ability to express their ideas in debate. The local is a most excellent training ground for citizenship, in that it stimulates its members to acquire a working knowledge of Government affairs as befitting a citizen, and to feel a responsibility for the public administration. We best learn to do by doing.

RESULTS OF SELF RELIANCE

Life on a farm, especially life on a pioneer farm, develops one outstanding trait; that is the quality of self-reliance. The transformation of a stretch of bare prairie or a piece of bush land, without house, stable, well or fence, to a liveable place, when the materials of improvement must be taken overland for many weary miles, calls for all the ingenuity, forethought and judgment which men and women possess. But through these very hardships, the homesteader is contributing more to his country than he knows. He is giving his boys and girls the spirit of resourcefulness, independence and self-reliance. This is the sort of citizenship material our nation needs.

No doubt the fact that Alberta comes within the "home-steading" belt is the chief reason why the farmers' organization of this province bespeaks self-reliance from the ground up. The habit of independence was firmly fixed in the individual lives of its adherents; no outside assistance was forthcoming; whatever solution was offered for the farmers' problem must come from the farmers themselves. The result is a vast organization "conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal."

The fundamental principles of men's and women's sections are so closely related that it is impossible to describe one without the other. The United Farm Women of Alberta, therefore, share the qualities of independence noticeable in the whole U.F.A. organization. It is an institution entirely self-governing. Its members can fashion its policy to suit their own needs. It is entirely self-supporting and accepts no grant or gratuity from any outside source whatsoever. Its locals are at liberty to take any action, political or otherwise, which may be decided upon by a majority of the members.

Since no financial assistance is forthcoming, the farm women's organization must depend absolutely upon its own talents for propaganda, education and administration work. This necessity, however, proves a blessing rather than a hindrance, for the spirit of self-reliance which has been developed finds its true expression in an organization whose policy calls for just this quality in its highest degree.

MEN AND WOMEN TOGETHER

The U.F.W.A. possesses one great advantage which is lacking in other organizations, in that it has the solid backing of the organized farmers; no slight thing when it comes to working for better legislation or any kind of reform. This close co-operation is the natural outcome of their individual lives. In the fullest sense, the farmer's wife is her husband's partner. How could she be otherwise when the growth of his business daily spreads itself before her eyes?

Again and again the women's section has rejoiced in the fact that the U.F.A. has endorsed without hesitation resolutions made directly in the interests of women. The result is that U.F.W.A. resolutions with regard to Mothers' Pensions, Clean Bill of Health before Marriage, First Aid Courses, Parental Guardianship, Dower Law, Educational Matters, Public Health, Equal Parental Rights, etc., etc., when presented to the Government become not only the expression of the opinion of farm women alone, but are representative of the opinions of the great majority of thinking men and women in rural Alberta.

We believe this spirit of mutual trust and helpfulness is the backbone of the farmers' organization. It is impossible to separate the interests of farm women from the interests of farm men. Neither can be complete without the other. It is a matter of pride to the U.F.W.A. that it is not working independently and alone for better conditions for the women only; but is working shoulder to shoulder with the farm men of the province for justice and equity for all classes. It is true that the functions of the two are slightly different, just as a woman's work in the home is different from man's work; but also as in the home, when once a definite purpose is decided upon, they work together for that cause with harmony, unity and power.

The Junior Section is a notable example of this united effort. The plan of bringing the Juniors into the organization originated with the U.F.W.A., but has been, from the first, heartily supported by the U.F.A. The officers of the U.F.W.A. conceived the idea of giving young farm people a Week's Study at the University. The U.F.A. locals backed that plan with financial assistance. In just the same way the whole Junior Section is supported loyally by both the men's and women's organizations. It is interesting to note that the same ideal of co-operative effort is placed before the junior members. This growing organization of young farm people is not a girl's organization, nor is it a boy's organization. It is a union of all the boys and girls from Alberta farms earnestly studying with the aid of their parent U.F.A.'s and U.F.W.A.'s to improve their

intellectual status by study, to bring dignity and beauty to their vocation, to lend their assistance in improving its economic condition, and to provide for themselves and their associates a happy and wholesome social life. At the root of these aspirations is the ideal of usefulness to their fellowmen. And that usefulness has its expression not in individual, but in collective, co-operative effort; learning to think and work together toward common ideals of truth and service.

A wonderful system of living, this system of co-operation! And its value stands clearly revealed when it is used to weld together the interests of men and women. In the words of Helen Ring Robinson:

"Men and women, together, find their social values increase.

"Men and women together enact better laws than either can apart.

"Men and women together bring a significance to citizenship that neither can bring alone.

"Together! That's the great word."

The Door of Opportunity has been swinging wide indeed for women in these Twentieth Century days, and we are passing through almost as if there were nothing strange about this door that has so long been tightly closed. New avenues of service are opening up to us, high ideals beckoning us—let us "follow the gleam." This desire for equality of opportunity with men, the desire to become Citizens of Canada in the fullest interpretation of the words, is decidedly a forward, not a retrograde movement, and to the advantage, not the detriment of the home. "There is nothing outside the home but affects the home" was never so true as in these days when the web of life is so complex. Tennyson believed that women would "gain in mental breadth," and yet not lose the distinctly feminine qualities that make possible the true home. Then, let us enlarge our hitherto small world of thought and activity to encircle the nation itself, let us haste not, but rest not in "turning opportunity to achievement."

The United Farm Women of Alberta, realizing this need, suggest to U.F.W.A. locals the following lines of activity as a broad basis of study:

Education, Health Matters, Young People's Work, Immigration, Legislation, Marketing, Peace and Arbitration, Social Service, Our New Canadian Citizenship—a realization of its privileges and its responsibilities.

Any one of these subjects might well engross all our activities for a considerable period; however, before we can throw our full weight as good citizens into the civic scale, we need a wide understanding of many matters of vital importance to ourselves, our children, and the nation at large. In other words, we need to aspire, with Ulysses, to "Follow knowledge like a sinking star, Beyond the utmost bounds of human thought."

Is not our name—The United Farm Women of Alberta—significant? Farm Women united—co-operating—learning to work together systematically to—

"Ring in the nobler modes of life
"With sweeter manners, purer laws."

